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Letter dated 5 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour of transmitting the voluntary national presentation of Australia entitled "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women" for the annual ministerial review to be held during the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and attached report as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Gary **Quinlan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2010/100.

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Annex to the letter dated 5 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Voluntary national presentation of Australia: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women

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A. Introduction

1. In 2000, Australia joined many countries around the world to pledge support to halve extreme poverty in the world by 2015. Australia is working to help developing countries to accelerate their progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. To do this, Australia's aid is being substantially increased. Over the past six years, it has increased by 70 per cent, to $3.8 billion. On current projections, it will more than double by 2015.

2. Australia is committed to development for all, recognizing that both men and women have a role to play in all aspects of development, and to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women as well as men are part of the development process. It believes that advancing gender equality and supporting women's full participation in economic, social and political life are development goals in their own right, and an essential element for achieving all Millennium Development Goals.

B. Importance of gender equality and women's empowerment

3. The year 2010 marks 10 years of efforts towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals. It also marks the fifteenth anniversary of the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and the commitment made by world leaders to advance women's rights by means of the Beijing Platform for Action. As such, 2010 is a milestone for the international community and an opportunity to reflect on the world's contribution to improving gender equality and the lives of women around the globe. Australia participated in the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action which highlighted the key achievements and challenges remaining if the international community were to advance the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment.[1]

4. There remain many challenges to achieving gender equality. Overall, economic opportunities for women still lag behind those of men. Women earn 75 per cent of what male co-workers earn, a difference that cannot be explained solely by the amount of schooling or experience. In many countries women have fewer educational and employment opportunities than do men, are often denied access to finance, and endure social restrictions that limit their chances for advancement. In some developing countries women still cannot vote, own property or venture outside the home without a male family member.

5. Despite the huge challenges, the risks of inaction are immense. A lack of progress in advancing gender equality and empowering women will hinder global progress in meeting each of the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, international evidence suggests that stalled progress in girls' secondary schooling means foregone reductions in fertility, maternal mortality, child mortality, malnutrition and other impediments to economic growth.[2] Furthermore, a lack of gender parity in primary and secondary schooling can lead to lost wages, reduced

[1] See the statement of Australia to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fourth session, New York, 3 March 2010. Available from www.australiaun.org/unny/100303_Third_CSW.html (accessed April 2010).

[2] United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2007: Women and Children, the Double Dividend of Gender Equality* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.XX.1).

labour force participation and lower productivity. It can also lead to higher rates of child mortality, malnutrition and maternal mortality among less educated women, and an increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS. In addition, violence against women underlies many of these challenges and is an obstacle to closing the gender gap and making progress towards achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals.[3]

C. What is Australia doing?

6. Australia has made a lot of progress over the past few years on improving gender equality; however, it recognizes that more progress must be made. Nevertheless, its experience and the lessons it has learned, as well as its gender research capacity, are important resources that we are sharing with the growing number of countries with which Australia now has development partnerships.

Broadening the scope: making a greater contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

7. Australia is one of the few major donors located in an area of largely developing countries. Given its location, the core of Australia's development assistance is devoted to helping its neighbours in the Asian and Pacific regions.

8. The Asian and Pacific regions have made progress towards realizing Millennium Development Goal 3, particularly in narrowing gender gaps in primary and secondary education and raising literacy rates. However, the progress made in respect of the indicators of economic and political empowerment under Goal 3 has been mixed, and most countries are not reducing maternal mortality rates fast enough under Millennium Development Goal 5. The Millennium Development Goal 3 target of gender parity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, has already been missed.

9. Australia is also responding to global efforts to accelerate progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by expanding its aid programme further into Africa, and into Latin America and the Caribbean.

Papua New Guinea and Pacific island countries

10. Australia has an important role to play in helping Pacific island countries accelerate their progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, and it recognizes that new approaches to development are required. Australia is the largest bilateral donor to the Pacific region, providing $1 billion in aid flows in 2009/10.

11. The Pacific Partnerships for Development initiative, launched by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008, marks a new era in relationships with Pacific Governments and is a commitment to work as partners to achieve shared goals, such as improved access to quality education, health services, private sector growth and employment.

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[3] United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2008. *Gender Equality Now: Accelerating the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals* (New York, 2008).

Asia

12. In South and East Asia, Australia is playing a leadership role in areas in which it has experience and expertise. This includes supporting the policy objectives of partner countries by building their capacity and strengthening their systems. For example, in the education sector in Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines, Australia is contributing to improving access to education (particularly for girls), building learning facilities and improving the quality of education. In Viet Nam, where a lack of toilets and hand-washing facilities in homes and at schools seriously affects the health of children, particularly in rural areas, it is working to improve water and sanitation facilities.[4] Australia is supporting rural development and improved food security in Cambodia, where women represent approximately 78 per cent of the agricultural workforce.[5] Good feedback on what works — and what does not — is key to strengthening public policy and programming in the region and supporting efforts to ensure that development benefits everyone.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

13. Militancy and extremism significantly constrain sustainable and broad-based development in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Australia recently doubled its aid programme in Pakistan, to $120 million over two years. Australia is supporting service delivery in health and education, improvement in rural livelihoods and strengthening of democratic governance, particularly in the border regions with Afghanistan; this work will be guided by the Australia-Pakistan Development Partnership.

14. Australia's programme in Afghanistan is helping to improve the lives of women and girls who have been systematically discriminated against and marginalized and who have had their basic human rights violated under the Taliban regime. Australia supports country-wide services which benefit women and institutions that promote women's rights. These include health clinics targeting safe motherhood programmes through antenatal, post-natal and children's health support, and support for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission which promotes and protects women's rights through advocacy, training and education. Australia also supports the active economic participation of Afghan women through microfinance initiatives. More than 440,000 Afghans are now accessing microfinance services across 24 provinces, and 64 per cent of these clients are female.

Africa

15. Australia has committed to broadening and deepening its engagement with Africa across the full spectrum of the relationship — trade and investment, peace and security, and humanitarian and development assistance. With about 50 per cent of sub-Saharan Africans living in extreme poverty and the region being the most off track measured against all of the Millennium Development Goals, Australia has increased its aid programme to Africa by 40 per cent over the past year, to $163.9 million. In its work, Australia draws on its unique experience and expertise

[4] See http://sanitationupdates.wordpress.com/tag/children/ (accessed April 2010).

[5] See www.fao.org/docrep/008/af348e/af348e06.htm (accessed April 2010).

in food security and agriculture, maternal and child health, water and sanitation and human resource capacity, all priorities if African countries are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Australia's expertise in agricultural research and domestic market reform will contribute considerably to increasing food security in Africa, where between 60 and 80 per cent of agricultural workers are women.[6]

Latin America and the Caribbean

16. Despite promising trends in many areas, particularly in education enrolment and access to reproductive health, the Latin America and Caribbean region is at risk of not achieving a number of the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal to halve extreme hunger and poverty and ensure environmental sustainability.[7]

17. Australia is expanding its aid engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Latin America, Australia has committed $4 million to support microfinance initiatives in Colombia and Peru.

18. Australia is also putting in place a new package of short and long-term scholarships. Trilateral cooperation — where a traditional donor partners with an emerging donor to help a third country — is a focus of its approach to development assistance in this region. Australia is pursuing such cooperation with Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico. It also committed $5 million in response to the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck the Chilean coast in February 2010.

19. The earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010 is evidence of the Caribbean region's vulnerability to natural disasters. Australia's new $60 million development partnership with the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is based on building regional resilience and supporting small island States in addressing the threats of natural disasters and climate change.

D. Closing the gender gap

20. Most, if not all, developing countries struggle to provide women with access to the most basic rights and services, and so severe gender inequalities persist. Gender gaps are very real impediments to sustainable development.

21. Even in countries in which progress has been made and trends are generally positive, there is no room for complacency. Many of Australia's development partners still fall in the bottom half of United Nations tables measuring various aspects of gender equality. Progress tends to slow as quick-win opportunities for closing gender gaps in these countries become fewer. The remaining gender inequalities and constraints become harder to overcome and require more sophisticated analysis, innovative and targeted interventions, and intensified support for the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders driving the change.

22. Finally, some countries have made significant progress and are introducing their own institutions and processes to integrate gender equality, although these are

[6] See www.ifpri.org/publication/women-s-participation-agricultural-research-and-higher-education-key-trends-sub-saharan-> (accessed April 2010).

[7] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* (July 2009). Available from www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202009%20ENG.pdf (accessed May 2010).

often embryonic and still weak. Australia is working with these countries to help strengthen these systems.

23. In response to these challenges, Australia is helping to narrow the gender gap through targeted assistance to address persistent barriers to gender equality. This includes making a substantial contribution to ending violence against women in our region by contributing to the evidence base for policy action and supporting a framework for implementation.

Addressing persistent barriers: making the case and taking action to end violence against women

Violence against women, and the fear of violence, are significant human rights violations. Without strong global action, the social, political and economic participation of women in many communities will continue to be severely limited by violence.

Developed countries, including Australia, still face this challenge. Nearly one in three Australian women experience physical violence and almost one in five will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Australia is taking a comprehensive approach domestically and through its international aid effort.

In the Pacific region, Australian research found violence against women was pervasive and severe. *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Approaches*, a report published by AusAID November 2008, contained an assessment of the effectiveness of methods being used to address violence against women in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, and painted a detailed picture of promising practices being used to prevent and respond to violence against women. A report released in response, *Stop Violence: Responding to Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor*, sets out Australia's priorities and actions to combat violence against women in these countries. The report focuses on three main strategies — improving women's access to justice, increasing women's access to support services and preventing violence against women.

Australia is putting these strategies into practice. For example, under the Papua New Guinea-Australia Law and Justice Programme, it is supporting an urban safety initiative, *Yumi Lukautim Mosbi* (Let's Look After Moresby), which, among other things, aims to improve safety for women and children. If women or children are in crisis, they can call the 24-hour free hotline and if necessary a security vehicle will be sent which can take them to a safe place. The Programme has also funded dedicated crisis shelters for women and children who are victims of violence.

Australia recognizes that ending violence against women requires a long-term commitment and is intensifying its efforts to respond. This includes building on its existing work in health and education and expanding its work with men and boys. Men and boys have a crucial role to play if the world is to end violence against women and Australia

supports community-based initiatives in this area. For example, it supports the Association of Men against Violence of Timor-Leste, a community-based education programme designed to raise awareness and change permissive attitudes towards violence against women.

While Australia's response in the Pacific focuses on domestic violence and sexual assault, it recognizes that women face a broader spectrum of violence and is addressing all forms of violence through its aid programme. In 2009, Australia co-sponsored Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), which led to the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in armed conflict. This global action complements Australia's ongoing efforts to reduce the incidence of sexual violence in armed conflict at the country level, such as in northern Iraq where its support to the International Rescue Committee provides services for victims of gender-based violence.

E. Gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals

24. Australia integrates gender equality across all areas of the aid programme and is working to ensure there are equal opportunities to participate at all levels of education, that women and girls have equal access to appropriate health care, and that women have equal opportunities to participate in the economy and hold leadership positions.

Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty

25. Australia is committed to reducing the number of people who live in hunger and poverty, and to achieving full employment for all.

26. Promoting shared and sustained economic growth is a powerful long-term path to poverty reduction. Investments in infrastructure, rural development, land reform and microfinance all support increased economic growth and opportunities for the poor.

27. For example, Australia is helping developing countries to increase their agricultural productivity through research and development, by strengthening agricultural markets and by promoting enterprise development. It is also supporting social safety net programmes that reduce the vulnerability of the poor to high food prices and other shocks.

28. Australia contributed $50 million to the World Bank's Food Crisis Response Programme, which is building social safety net programmes in Cambodia, Kiribati, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. Australia is also spending an additional $464 million during the period 2009-2013 on agricultural development to address the food crisis and long-term food security issues in Asia, the Pacific and Africa.

29. Women are less likely than men to be in paid employment. In many countries, women have restricted access to land and property, and face difficulty in accessing formal credit. Microfinance gives women options for improving their livelihoods,

including setting up businesses and investing in education and health. This can help build women's self-confidence and assertiveness, often enabling them to obtain greater decision-making power, control over assets, and mobility within their households and in the broader community.

Putting it into practice

30. Australia is providing $49.1 million in Bangladesh during the period 2007-2012 to assist the work of BRAC, which supports women living in extreme poverty. BRAC is the largest non-governmental organization in Bangladesh and its programme, Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction, is designed to lift more than 3 million extremely poor people out of poverty by 2012. The programme is targeted at women, many of them single but with responsibility for feeding the whole family. The programme seeks to support ultra-poor women in establishing small businesses and to earn an income by providing productive assets, such as cows or goats; delivering intensive training to ensure an income stream from those productive assets; and providing a regular cash stipend until their new small business creates a stable livelihood. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Papua New Guinea, Australia is supporting the World Bank's adolescent girls initiative by advancing the economic empowerment of adolescent girls as they move from education to employment. The initiative is helping girls to complete their education, develop skills that match market demand, and find mentors and job placements.

31. In Colombia and Peru, Australia is working with the Inter-American Development Bank to empower women through microfinance. It is providing $2 million to support 100,000 Peruvian women entrepreneurs through training, networking and mentoring, arming them with the management skills and confidence required to develop more sustainable and profitable businesses.

Millennium Development Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

32. Australia is working to ensure that all girls and boys are able to complete primary school and to improve the literacy rates of young women and men.

33. Women and girls are much less likely to complete primary school and go on to higher levels of education. Ensuring that girls as well as boys are able to attend school is a crucial part of reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. It means that both women and men will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to their society.

34. Australia recognizes that education, particularly that of women and girls, yields some of the highest returns of all development investments. This is why education is a key element of the Australian aid programme.

35. Included in Australian-funded education programmes are specific measures to:

(a) Enable more girls to enter school by building schools and improving infrastructure in a range of countries, including Indonesia and the Philippines;

(b) Reduce gender stereotyping in learning materials and methods through curriculum reforms, such as those being undertaken in Vanuatu through the Vanuatu Education Sector Action Plan;

(c) Improve the gender balance in teaching workforces by focusing on gender equality in teacher training programmes, such as those under way in Bangladesh;

(d) Empower women to play a greater role in the management of education through school-based management programmes, including in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Papua New Guinea.

Putting it into practice

36. Australia is supporting the building or extension of 2,075 junior secondary schools and *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Islamic junior secondary schools) in Indonesia through funding of $387 million over five years.

37. These schools are providing education to the poorest and most disadvantaged Indonesian children, particularly girls. The schools are creating an additional 300,000 places and helping the Indonesian Government to meet its target for all children to receive nine years of education by 2010.

38. The schools are being built to accommodate the particular needs of various groups of children, for example, through disability-inclusive design and the provision of separate toilet facilities for girls and boys.

Scholarships

39. Building technical and political leaders in developing countries is fundamental to the success of development efforts. Scholarships first became a component of Australia's overseas aid programme in the 1950s and continue to be important to this day. Australia provides approximately $150 million a year for scholarships for people from Asia, the Pacific and Africa.

40. Women often face specific barriers to participation in scholarship programmes owing to lower levels of education and/or English, family roles and responsibilities, and social and cultural expectations. Australia's scholarships programme works to overcome these barriers through a range of strategies, such as additional English language training or academic preparation, providing funds for a travelling companion to accompany women applicants to tests, and specifically targeting women through promotional activities.

Putting it into practice

41. In 2009, Savina Nongebatu was one of seven women from disabled people's organizations who were recipients of the Australian Leadership Awards Fellowships. This programme enhances leadership skills, professional development and networking skills for disabled people's organizations in Asia and the Pacific. At the launch of the strategy paper entitled "Development for All: A Disability Strategy for the Australian Aid Programme 2009-2014", in December 2008, Ms. Nongebatu, stated that as a woman with disability, heading an advocacy organization of and for people with disability in Solomon Islands — a post-conflict nation — on a volunteer basis, it was crucial to provide specific training of leaders with disabilities, especially girls and women, and that support for women leaders and potential leaders must be explored fully.

Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

42. Australia recognizes that achieving equality between women and men is crucial if poverty is to be reduced and all people are able to fully participate in their communities. Australia recognizes that strengthening women's leadership role, including in national parliaments, to advance gender equality, is an important step towards their achieving economic participation in society. This includes ensuring that both women and men hold positions as leaders in their communities, that they participate equally in all levels of education, and that they are able to undertake paid employment on an equal basis.

43. Internationally, the United Nations has recorded that women hold only 18.5 per cent of parliamentary seats and that in some countries there are no women in parliament. The percentage of women in national parliaments has increased slightly in the past decade, however, the rate of progress remains unacceptably slow. It is estimated that few countries will achieve a critical mass of 30 per cent of women in parliament by 2015 and it may take another 40 years for women to constitute 40 per cent of parliamentary representation in developing regions.[8]

44. In the Pacific, women typically have less active political involvement than in any other region, holding an average of 3 per cent of seats in national parliaments.[9] Australia is helping its Pacific neighbours to address this through a $6.2 million commitment, in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), to the Gender Equality in Political Governance Programme.

Working with UNIFEM to promote gender equality in Pacific governance

Australia supports the Gender Equality in Political Governance Programme, a five-year commitment that began in 2009, in partnership with UNIFEM. Working in 15 Pacific island countries with a focus on Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, early achievements of the programme have included:

- Training programmes held in seven Pacific island countries to improve the skills, knowledge and confidence of 220 women and men (current or potential leaders, civic educators, media professionals, electoral observers and key stakeholders in electoral processes)
- Six regional forums and local consultation workshops held to strengthen the skills of gender equality advocates so that they are better equipped to demand constitutional and legal amendments by adopting temporary special measures and other forms of affirmative action to increase political representation of Pacific women.

[8] United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009* (New York, 2008).

[9] United Nations 2005 b (indicator 12).

Putting it into practice

45. The low level of representation of women in leadership positions in all aspects of life in Papua New Guinea is a significant issue. Australia is actively providing support for women to take up leadership positions in government, business and education and within their communities, through initiatives in Papua New Guinea, such as:

(a) Training around 330 district women's facilitators on how to visit, train and support school boards of management and their local communities, covering most of the 3,000 primary schools in the country;

(b) Providing assistance to the law and justice sector, which has seen a significant increase in the number of new women village court magistrates recruited and trained across the country, up from 10 in 2004 to 384 by the end of 2009.

Increasing women's economic empowerment

46. Improving women's participation in the economy is an important part of achieving gender equality. Based on estimates by the United Nations, men are more likely to be employed, with 73 per cent of working-age men in employment, compared to only 50 per cent of women.

Putting it into practice

47. In the Pacific, Australia is partnering with the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank to identify and address the barriers to women's economic participation through the Pacific Women in Private Sector Development initiative. This initiative includes action to reform the investment climate and improve the business environment by seeing it through a gender lens. Assessments have been conducted in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Tonga.

Millennium Development Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

48. Australia is committed to reducing the number of children who die before they reach 5 years of age. According to the World Health Organization, more than 10,000 newborns die from preventable complications during pregnancy, childbirth or the first week of life. The United Nations Children's Fund has estimated that across the world in 2006, 9.7 million children died before their fifth birthday.

49. In many places, a preference for sons can mean that girls do not have the same access to food and health care as their brothers, and so girls are at greater risk of dying before their fifth birthday.

Putting it into practice

50. In Nepal, Australia is supporting the United Nations Children's Fund in reducing child mortality and malnutrition through Nepal's national vitamin A expansion programme. Australia has been supporting this programme since 1999. During 2008/09, this programme provided high-dose vitamin A to 3.7 million boys and girls aged between 6 months and 5 years of age, and helped to prevent more than 15,000 child deaths. Distribution coverage in Nepal now is above 90 per cent

(91.7 per cent for girls and 92.4 per cent for boys) and vitamin-A deficiency is no longer a public health problem.

51. In 2009, Australia signed the World Food Programme's first ever multi-year funding agreement, committing itself to $180 million in funding over four years in the fight against global hunger. This includes supporting dedicated school feeding programmes in Asia, Africa and Latin America to reduce the number of children, particularly girls, who suffer from hunger, while also improving school attendance and educational results.

Millennium Development Goal 5: Improve maternal health

52. Australia is committed to improving maternal health, including by strengthening health systems. It is working to improve maternal health through increasing women's access to reproductive health services, increasing the number of births attended by skilled health personnel and improving women's access to health-care services during their pregnancies.

53. The World Health Organization estimates that more than half a million women every year die during pregnancy or childbirth, and more than 90 per cent of these largely preventable deaths occur in developing countries. Australia is particularly concerned about the high maternal mortality ratio in Papua New Guinea (733 per 100,000 reported in the country's 2006 demographic health survey), which is compounded by the ageing health workforce. It is working with a Papua New Guinea-led taskforce established for the purpose of taking urgent action on this issue.

54. Having births assisted by skilled attendants is the most effective way of preventing maternal deaths, and it goes hand-in-hand with ensuring that women have access to good pregnancy and postnatal care, and are able to time and space their pregnancies using family planning.

Putting it into practice

55. In Ethiopia, 94 per cent of all births take place without a medically trained person in attendance, based on the national demographic and health survey.

56. The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, founded in 1974 by Australian obstetrician-gynaecologist, Catherine Hamlin, provides expectant mothers with access to trained midwives and health services. To extend such services, its midwifery college is providing training for young Ethiopian women. This will improve maternal health and contribute to reducing the number of women and babies who die during childbirth. The hospital is also establishing rural maternal health clinics to provide antenatal and maternal health services, and skilled medical help to women during labour. Australia is providing funding of $2.3 million over two years which will help see 25 rural maternal health clinics built and the college expanded to take student enrolments from 12 to 60 students each year.

57. Australia supports the work of the United Nations Population Fund to help improve reproductive health and safe motherhood, reduce HIV, eliminate gender-based violence and promote gender equality in the developing world. It also supports the Fund in integrating sexual and reproductive health programmes into emergency responses so that when disaster strikes, there is still access to family planning services, assisted delivery and emergency obstetric care.

Millennium Development Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

58. Australia is working to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases by increasing young people's knowledge of HIV/AIDS and improving access to appropriate drugs and other means to prevent and treat this disease and others, such as malaria and tuberculosis.

59. Strategies to prevent HIV infection must address the vulnerabilities of both women and men.

60. Some ideas about masculinity, particularly those related to power and violence against women, have a significant impact on women's rights and increase HIV vulnerability for women and girls. Sustainable programmes to change men's behaviour are therefore vital in reducing the spread of HIV. Some perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes also affect men and boys, and have negative impacts on their health. These too need to be addressed.

61. Care and support strategies must also recognize that women often carry the greater burden of care where they or a family member are living with HIV.

62. Prevention strategies must also ensure that the most marginalized and vulnerable women have their rights respected and have access to services.

Putting it into practice

63. In Papua New Guinea, Australia is supporting the integration of gender issues, including measures to respond to violence against women, as part of its work with non-governmental organizations on HIV/AIDS.

64. In the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, an Australian-supported project is using men as facilitators to run village-based activities on gender-based violence. A project in Eastern Highlands Province has involved female volunteers to increase interaction with women in the villages, increase the distribution of female condoms and increase referrals of women to treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

65. In Solomon Islands, Australian support has helped to substantially reduce new cases of malaria, from 199 per 1,000 in 2003 to 82 per 1,000 in 2008.

66. In conjunction with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Australia supports advanced training for counsellors working with survivors of gender-based violence and the development of tools and training materials for advocacy on HIV/AIDS and gender.

Millennium Development Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

67. Australia recognizes that ensuring environmental sustainability, including sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, is essential to improving the lives of women and girls.

68. Globally, the world is on track to meet the target for access to safe drinking water but not on track to meet that of access to basic sanitation. Access to safe drinking water has a significant impact on the lives of women by reducing the time they spend collecting water, and by improving the health of whole communities.

69. Providing water and safe sanitation facilities for women and girls also has other benefits. Offering water supply and separate sanitation facilities to girls in

schools encourages their school attendance. Children also take home the good hygiene practices they learn in school, which extends benefits to the whole family.

Putting it into practice

70. Australia is committed to integrating a gender perspective in environmental management, disaster management and climate change adaptation programmes and to ensuring that women's needs and their knowledge of natural systems are part of environmental policies. This includes recognizing gender inequalities in access to decision-making roles, resources and technologies when developing mitigation and disaster risk reduction activities, and considering the invaluable roles women play in promoting household and community sustainability.

71. Australia's approach to environmental sustainability focuses on increasing water supply and sanitation infrastructure; improving national and local water, sanitation and hygiene policies; and improving water supply and sanitation service delivery. This approach is producing results in many countries. Australia is a principal donor to a five-year programme of the Government of Viet Nam, which has led to 150 medium- to large-scale piped water schemes being built or upgraded, and hygienic latrines being provided to 504 schools, 181 health clinics and markets, and 100,000 households.

72. Through programmes in Kiribati and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Australia has supported the provision of separate toilets and clean water to improve school environments and encourage increased school attendance by girls. In Timor-Leste, Australia provides support for the rural water supply and sanitation programme to improve water and sanitation facilities in rural areas, including for women and girls.

73. The United Nations Development Programme and Australia are supporting work in the Pacific to improve the way in which disaster risk management and climate change policy and activities respond to the different needs of men and women.

Millennium Development Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

74. Working together in global partnerships is vital if the world is to eradicate poverty. Many small island developing States face a range of development challenges, including ecological fragility, proneness to natural disasters and vulnerability to climate change. In addition, their lesser capacity to respond to challenges exacerbates their vulnerabilities and risks, and reduces their resilience to global events, such as climate change and globalization.

75. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to addressing these challenges. A global partnership for development needs to involve women and men as partners and decision makers in order to ensure that women and men both benefit from the work of this partnership.

Putting it into practice

76. Australia is committed to the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and to addressing the special circumstances of these States. Australia is working towards sustainable energy development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the Pacific. It recognizes that

effective sustainable development in the Pacific must include women as planners, sources of knowledge, decision makers and implementers.

77. Australia is a strong supporter of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific Programme, which improves the capacity of both women and men to improve their food security and livelihoods and, as a result, improve their resilience to disaster risks and the impacts of climate change. It has increased technological training for women in how to grow drought-resistant and saltwater-resistant crops, improve irrigation to prevent drought, construct terrace hillsides to prevent landslides and plant home gardens to improve accessibility to nutritious foods. It has also increased women's participation in national and community-level decisions about rural development.

F. Delivering better aid

78. Australia is committed to the effective use of its aid funding so that lasting development results are achieved. Advancing gender equality is a critical part of delivering effective aid and reducing poverty in the long term. Other elements involve working more in partnership, aligning activities with the development plans and systems of the partner country, ensuring policy coherence, and focusing on monitoring and evaluating the aid programme and communicating results.

Power of partnerships

79. Partners bring different skills, knowledge, resources, networks and perspectives to the table. Australia is initiating cooperative relationships involving multi-year funding arrangements with many multilateral organizations, other donor countries, civil society organizations, the private sector and its partner countries in development, which allow for longer-term planning.

80. Australia is supporting and strengthening United Nations leadership of global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through partnership agreements with key United Nations agencies. These partnerships promote increased collaboration on policy and programme issues and provide guaranteed multi-year core funding worth more than $343 million (2008-2012). For example, Australia's support to UNIFEM will strengthen efforts to achieve gender equality and reduce violence towards women in the developing world.

Ownership and accountability

81. Australia strives to build partner country capacity and ownership of development, helping to ensure long-term sustainability. It is also providing more predictable aid commitments. For example, in 2008, in association with the Australia Indonesia Partnership Country Strategy, Australia made a five-year commitment of up to $2.5 billion in aid funding. This stated funding commitment provided Australia and Indonesia with the assurance that they could plan and implement programmes for several years.

82. Another central element of Australia's new approach to aid in the Pacific is the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific, agreed to by leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in August 2009. The Compact is designed to improve development outcomes in the region and achieve real progress measured

against the Millennium Development Goals by ensuring that Pacific island countries and their development partners work in a much more coordinated way to support country efforts. Important aspects of the Compact include: using national development plans to guide donor support; strengthening of the service delivery systems of Pacific island countries; collecting better development data; and conducting country peer reviews and partner reporting processes to monitor the effectiveness of the Compact. This initiative provides an important opportunity to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

83. Australia strengthened the quality and impact of its aid programme when it established the Office of Development Effectiveness in 2006. This Office monitors the quality of the aid provided and prepares annual reviews of development effectiveness. These reviews are a visible part of Australia's commitment to increase aid effectiveness and improve the transparency and accountability of its aid programme.

84. Australia is also placing greater emphasis on communicating the difference its support is making to development outcomes. By identifying what has worked and learning lessons from what has not worked, Australia is able to continuously improve the quality of its activities.

Linking development, security and gender equality

85. Development assistance and security are intrinsically linked. Conflict and insecurity can often reverse development gains and undermine progress towards achieving gender equality. More than one half of Australian bilateral aid programmes operate in countries that are fragile, vulnerable to conflict, conflict-affected or recovering from conflict.[10]

86. To ensure gender inequalities are not widened during conflict and post-conflict situations, Australia recognizes the significance of women's roles in preventing, managing and resolving conflict. We support full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.[11]

87. To build more sustainable peace, Australia is supporting a range of initiatives to promote women's roles in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict settings, at both the grass-roots and political levels. On International Women's Day in March 2010, Australia announced a contribution of nearly $4 million to support women's roles in peacebuilding and to respond to violence against women in conflict situations. This builds on its existing work in the Pacific, which provides training for key policymakers and civil society organizations in Bougainville, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga and promotes the role of women in conflict mediation and peacebuilding efforts in the Philippines, in partnership with the Mindanao Commission on Women.

88. Where development and security challenges intersect, the maintenance of coherent policy approaches is particularly important. Australia's whole-of-government approach to addressing development and security concerns combines the

[10] Over 57 per cent of AusAID major bilateral programmes operate in countries that are fragile, vulnerable to conflict, conflict-affected or recovering from conflict.

[11] Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted unanimously on 31 October 2000 and was the first resolution passed by the Security Council that specifically addressed the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

expertise of its development, police, defence and diplomatic resources to stabilize and support recovery in partner countries experiencing conflict and insecurity.

89. The engagement of a range of governmental departments not only promotes policy coherence across government, but facilitates the involvement of a broader range of expertise in delivering the aid programme, as demonstrated through Australia's ongoing commitment to countries such as Afghanistan and Timor-Leste, as well as through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands, Australia's development assistance aims to achieve a more prosperous and secure future for the country by addressing long-term development and security challenges. This assistance is delivered through a bilateral aid programme and through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). In June 2009, the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI signed a framework (2009-2013) which outlines the approach and focus of the partnership.

The mandate of RAMSI focuses on three core programmes: economic governance and growth, machinery of government, and law and justice. The machinery of government programme aims to support a governmental administration that is strategic, professional, transparent and accountable in the delivery of services.

Women in Government Strategy

As part of the machinery of government programme, the Women in Government Strategy is the first-ever coordinated approach towards advancing women in the Solomon Islands parliament. This strategy aims to strengthen women's participation in administration and representation in government, including through increasing the percentage of women at various levels within the public service and reducing barriers to their election.

The support provided under the Women in Government Strategy includes assisting the Ministry of Women to create a taskforce for: advancing women in parliament; providing mentoring and learning programmes for women in the governmental, community, church and business sectors; training more than 50 potential female members of boards and commissions; and supporting better coordination of donor funding for the development of a new Government policy on gender equality and women's development.

Gender integration and disability

90. The World Bank estimates that people with disability account for up to 20 per cent of the poor in developing countries.[12] Women with disability are often doubly disadvantaged, through their status as women and as persons with disability, and hence represent one of the most marginalized groups in society.

91. The need to take into account the intersection of gender and disability is a guiding principle of Australia's strategy, entitled "Development for all: towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid programme 2009-2014". Women and children with disability are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse (both within and outside conflict and humanitarian settings) and they face additional barriers to accessing basic services, achieving economic empowerment, pursuing educational opportunities, and being involved in decision-making and leadership roles.

92. The above-mentioned strategy, developed in close consultation with people with disability, focuses on improving the quality of life and ensuring the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of the aid programme, including in the planning, implementation and review processes.

93. Within the Australian aid programme, gender and disability assessments are conducted as part of programme design and implementation. For example, a gender assessment was conducted during the design phase of the Viet Nam-Australia Vision Support Programme, revealing that women and girls, including women and girls with disability, have a significant prevalence of avoidable blindness. This resulted in the inclusion of a high-level objective to reduce gender inequality in access to, and health benefits from, comprehensive eye care in Viet Nam; the related programme began in March 2010.

G. Meeting the challenge ahead

94. There is a great deal still to be achieved if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met. 2010 is a landmark year, during which the international community will sharpen its focus on the Goals in order to galvanize efforts as 2015 approaches. Australia recognizes that empowering women and girls will speed up progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; without gender equality, the Goals will not be achieved.

95. Australia is playing its part but is mindful of the challenges ahead. Australia will continue its work towards closing the gender gap and ensure that measures promoting equality between women and men are included throughout its aid programme, in concert with its development partners. Between now and 2015 much more needs to be done, but together we will make a difference.

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[12] See A. Elwan, "Poverty and disability: a survey of the literature", Social Protection Discussion Paper, No. 9932 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 1999).